



District 1

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King County Councilmember Bob Ferguson

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SPRING 2006



King County

Dear Neighbors:

Like many of you, I am following the ongoing Seattle P-I investigation "Conduct Unbecoming" regarding alleged deputy misconduct in the King County Sheriff's Office. I am alarmed by recent articles detailing retaliation by deputies against citizens who file complaints with the Sheriff's Office. I am concerned that deputy misconduct is impacting the public safety of our neighborhoods and unfairly tainting the overwhelming majority of deputies who serve our community with honor.

Reforming the Sheriff's Office is one of my top priorities for 2006. Earlier this year, I proposed creating independent civilian oversight of the King County Sheriff's Office to oversee citizen complaints and deputy misconduct investigations. Our current structure lacks transparency and accountability. My proposal is a step toward real reform. More information about my proposal is included in this newsletter.

To discuss this good government proposal and learn more about the King County Sheriff's Office, I invite you to attend my upcoming town meeting that is dedicated to this subject. I have asked Sheriff Sue Rahr to be my guest so she can directly answer your questions.

Sincerely,

Bob Ferguson

**Please join
me:**

**Tuesday, April 4
7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Inglemoor High School
Cafeteria
15500 Simonds Road
Northeast
in Kenmore**

KING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FACTS

Who is the King County Sheriff?

Sue Rahr serves as the current King County Sheriff. She was appointed in January 2005 to serve as the Sheriff when former Sheriff Dave Reichert became a member of Congress. She was subsequently elected to office in November 2005.

Who Selects the Sheriff?

The citizens of King County elect the Sheriff every four years. The Sheriff was not always an elected position. In 1968, King County voters gave the authority to the County Executive to hire and fire the Sheriff. In 1997, King County voters established the office of the Sheriff as a non-partisan elective office.

Who does the Sheriff Serve?

The King County Sheriff provides local police service to the 364,000 residents of unincorporated King County. In addition, the Sheriff provides local police services under contract to twelve cities including Kenmore, Shoreline, and Woodinville. The Sheriff also administers regional services for all 1.8 million King County residents.

What Services does the Sheriff Provide?

The King County Sheriff provides regional services such as the Automated Fingerprint Identification System, 911 call and dispatch, King County Search and Rescue, and law enforcement for the King County Airport, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and Metro Transit. In addition, the Sheriff contracts with several local

school districts to provide School Resource Officers, a school based policing program that encourages a safe learning environment.

What is the Size of the Sheriff's Office?

The King County Sheriff's Office is one of the largest law enforcement agencies in the Pacific Northwest, and third in size behind the Seattle Police Department and the Washington State Patrol. The

Sheriff's Office includes over 1,000 employees, with approximately 700 commissioned officers and over 300 professional staff. The annual budget is about \$130 million, nearly half of which is supported by city contract revenues and Federal and State government grants.



In January, Bob and Councilmember Julia Patterson announced their proposal to create independent civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office to oversee citizen complaints and deputy misconduct investigations.

How is the Sheriff's Office Organized?

There are four divisions within the Sheriff's Office to provide law enforcement. Field Operations consists of uniformed patrol officers that provide direct police service to our community. Criminal Investigations Division provides follow-up investigations, warrants, and investigates crimes related

to homicide, fraud, domestic violence, and other criminal offenses. Special Operations Division provides support to Metro Transit, K-9 dog unit, bomb disposal, hostage negotiations, and other specified services. Technical Services Division provides support for the Sheriff, 911 call and dispatch, fingerprint identification and other direct citizen services.

INDEPENDENT CIVILIAN OVERSIGHT

Conduct Unbecoming

Many of you are reading the Seattle P-I investigative reporting series “Conduct Unbecoming” (www.seattlepi.com/conductunbecoming/) regarding alleged deputy misconduct in the King County Sheriff’s Office. One of the issues raised in this series relates to lack of civilian oversight or independent review of the Sheriff’s Office, particularly in regard to citizen complaints.

Citizen Complaint Process

Currently, citizen complaints are received and investigated solely by the Sheriff’s Office. There is no independent civilian review of this process.

I recently introduced legislation with fellow Democrat Councilmember Julia Patterson calling for permanent, independent civilian oversight of the King County Sheriff’s Office.

Oversight Models

We spent a significant amount of time examining other jurisdictions to see what type of civilian oversight model would work best for King County. One thing was clear from our research—King County is behind our peer cities and counties in creating accountability through civilian oversight. Along the West Coast, the cities of Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Los Angeles County have already implemented such oversight.

Our proposal is modeled after Los Angeles County. Like King County, Los Angeles County also has a separately elected Sheriff. Los Angeles County’s independent civilian oversight office is considered a successful, national model.

Office of Law Enforcement Oversight

There are two pieces to our proposal. First, a new office of Law Enforcement Oversight will be created in the King County Ombudsman’s office to receive and actively monitor investigations and citizen complaints concerning deputy misconduct in the King County Sheriff’s Office.

Civilians will staff the office of Law Enforcement Oversight with a background in law enforcement and civil rights. Most importantly, the office will be completely independent of the Sheriff’s Office. In addition, the Office of Law Enforcement Oversight will also receive whistleblower complaints from deputies thereby providing an outlet to complain without fear of retaliation.

**For more
information
on independent civilian
oversight of the King County
Sheriff’s Office, please visit my
website at
[www.metrokc.gov/
ferguson](http://www.metrokc.gov/ferguson)**

Independent Auditor of Law Enforcement

The second piece of the proposal will establish an Independent Auditor of Law Enforcement to review the procedures and trends of the King County Sheriff’s Office. The emphasis for the Auditor role will be to recommend long-term policy reforms.

Sheriff’s Office Hearings

As Chair of the Council’s Law, Justice, and Human Services Committee, I am holding a series of public briefings and hearings on this proposal. I welcome your comments and invite you to help guide public policy regarding reform of the Sheriff’s Office.

To view the legislation or receive more information, please contact my office at (206) 296-1001 or visit the website at <http://mkcclegisearch.metrokc.gov> and enter 2006-0037 as the File ID. I will keep you updated as our proposal moves forward.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE REFORM

King County Sheriff Blue-Ribbon Task Force

In February, Sheriff Sue Rahr announced the creation of a temporary ten member blue-ribbon task force to review internal investigation procedures and recommend policy changes regarding deputy misconduct.

The members of the task force were appointed in collaboration by the King County Executive, Prosecutor, Council, and Sheriff. The task force includes representatives from the ACLU, law enforcement, civil rights, and the judicial system.

Former County Executive Randy Revelle will chair the task force.

**For more
information**

**please contact me at
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or visit my website at
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ferguson](http://www.metrokc.gov/ferguson)**

An internal review by the task force is currently underway. The task force will make recommendations on civilian oversight and whether the Sheriff should be an elected or appointed position. A report from the task force is expected by September 2006. To learn more or attend a future task force public meeting, please contact me at (206) 296-1001.

Place
stamp
here

Bob Ferguson

**King County Councilmember
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Seattle, WA 98104**

SURVEY RESULTS

SHERIFF'S OFFICE REFORM SURVEY

Please help guide public policy regarding law enforcement oversight and reform. For more information, please review this newsletter. Please check the boxes that best reflects your opinions.

Appointed or Elected Sheriff

King County voters currently elect the King County Sheriff. Until 1998, the County Executive had the authority to hire and fire the Sheriff.

- ☐ I support having an elected Sheriff. The voters deserve final say over who occupies this important post.
- ☐ The Sheriff should be an appointed position. The job requires a qualified professional, who doesn't have to be a politician.

Providing Civilian Oversight

Many cities and counties have civilian oversight of citizen complaints and investigations of deputy misconduct. Supporters say civilian oversight brings accountability and transparency to law enforcement. Critics claim it is ineffective and unfair to deputies who frequently make life and death decisions. Currently there is no civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office.

- ☐ I support independent civilian oversight of the King County Sheriff's Office.
- ☐ I do not support civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office.

Creating a Civilian Oversight Structure

If you support oversight, which model do you prefer?

- ☐ A civilian who advises the Sheriff.
- ☐ A civilian review board that reviews investigations and reports to the Council.
- ☐ A civilian review board that actively monitors and participates with investigations and reports to the Council.
- ☐ An agency that conducts independent investigations and reports findings to the Council.

Survey Online

To mail, simply detach the survey, fold with mailing panel visible, and attach a postage stamp. This survey is also available online at www.metrokc.gov/ferguson.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Investigation of Past Misconduct

Recent newspaper reports highlighted alleged deputy misconduct and mismanagement in the Sheriff's Office. Should these allegations be officially investigated?

- ☐ The King County Council should review all allegations to determine what happened to guide reforms.
- ☐ The Sheriff's Office should reopen these cases and conduct a thorough review.
- ☐ The cases should not be reopened— it's time to move on.

Questions / Comments:

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Email:

Address:



King County Councilmember

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Tuesday, April 4

Please join me at a Town Meeting
on the King County Sheriff's Office
with guest Sheriff Sue Rahr.

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Inglemoor High School Cafeteria

15500 Simonds Road Northeast in Kenmore

Need Directions? Call me at (206) 296-1001.

Sheriff's Office Town Meeting

IN THE COMMUNITY

Volunteering at the Northshore Senior Center

My staff and I recently visited the Northshore Senior Center in Bothell. The Northshore Senior Center provides classes, recreational activities, nutrition programs, and companionship for over 8,000 seniors a year. My staff and I enjoyed serving coffee and muffins while visiting with seniors. To learn more about the Northshore Senior Center, please visit www.northshoreseniorcenter.org or contact (425) 487-2441.

Each month, my staff and I volunteer at a different non-profit organization in District 1. Volunteering is one of the most rewarding activities we do as an office. If you know of a non-profit that can use our time and service, please contact me at (206) 296-1001.



Bob and Marty Dennis, Executive Director of the Northshore Senior Center in Bothell.